GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2936
ANSWERED ON:12.12.2011
WAGES OF BEEDI AND FARM LABOURERS
Natrajan Meenakshi

Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the difference in minimum wages of Bidi workers and farm labourers in the country;

(b) the steps being taken by the Government to address the difference in the wages between the said sectors;

(c) whether the Government proposes to regulate the bidi sector in a more efficient manner by changing the current norm for identifying small, medium and large Bidi manufacturers in order to check circumvention of labour laws and tax laws;

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;

(e) whether the Government is aware of the lack of financial and medical support to bidi workers once they retire; and

(f) if so, the corrective steps being taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI MALLIKARJUN KHARGE)

(a): Under the Minimum Wages Act, both Central and State Governments are the appropriate governments to fix/revise and review minimum rates of wages for farm labourers. The Beedi workers, however, fall under the jurisdiction of State Sphere only and their wages are fixed on piece rate basis. On the basis of the information available, two statements showing the wages of the Bidi workers and farm labourers respectively under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 in different States/Union Territories are annexed (Annexure I & II).

(b): Although there is no uniformity in minimum wage rates across the States, the Government has felt a need for a uniform floor level minimum wage below which wages should not fall. Accordingly, the concept of National Floor Level Minimum Wage was mooted on the basis of the recommendations of the National Commission on Rural Labour (NCRL) in 1991. The National Floor Level Minimum Wage (NFLMW) is revised from time to time on the basis of increase in the Consumer Price Index. The latest rate of NFLMW is Rs.115/- per day with effect from 01.04.2011.

(c): Presently, there is no proposal to change the current norm for indentifying the Beedi manufacturers.

(d): Does not arise.

(e) & (f): At present, Government is operating a number of welfare schemes for the Beedi workers. Infact, the expenditure incurred on these schemes is higher than the cess collected on Beedi. Recently, Government has approved 4 new hospitals and 40 dispensaries for beedi Workers. Government has also decided to extend the Rastriya Swasthaya Bima Yojana (RSBY) to Beedi Workers.